

THE EAST TIMOR BROUHAHA SOUTH-SOUTH SOLIDARITY: THE UNDERLYING CONTEXT**

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Despite the demise of the Cold War, the world continues to simmer in conflict. Contradictions have festered over the centuries, but it is class discord -- the proverbial struggle between the haves and the have nots -- that has shaped the destinies of peoples and the boundaries of nations.

In the global arena, this contradiction has taken the form of the struggle between the North and South or between the few affluent industrialized countries, on the one hand, and the underdeveloped or developing, on the other. In the midst of the Cold War, this contradiction took a backseat to the East-West conflict, a veritable clash of social systems and ideologies in which Capitalism is pitted against communism, and "democracy" against "totalitarianism".

The end of the Cold War has brought to the fore once again the North-South contradiction and with it, the need for South-South solidarity and cooperation.

South-South peoples solidarity is the global vision of all those strongly rooted in their respective social movements, seeking to come together to evolve a concerted and complimentary effort for their own as well as mutual liberation.

There have been efforts to develop this solidarity, dating as far back as the Non-Aligned Movement of Nehru and Sukarno. Even Julius Nyerere's South Commission worked for the realization of this dream. Most of these, however, have been initiated by governments and can only go as far as their national or even more limited political interests converge. The record of South-South cooperation has so far been dismal, with the South countries often more interested in fighting among each other for the largesse of the North.

The South is not only the peoples of the Third World. They also include within the North: the disenfranchised, the marginalized, the homeless and those who steadfastly remain in solidarity with the Third World.

It is high time that the grassroots movement seize the initiative and took the lead in building and sustaining South-South solidarity. A South-South Movement anchored on liberation

** This was written before the East Timor conference became an instant international and diplomatic issue

movements, peoples organizations, sectoral formations, international and national NGOs, the academe and patriotic personalities -- is an emerging reality whose time has come.

Conferences, symposia, fora, exchanges, internships among and between South peoples such as this conference on East Timor are concrete manifestations of this burgeoning South-South solidarity movement.

It is efforts like these that will engender a truly dynamic South-South solidarity and in the process help liberate our respective peoples.